



## Education

### Corneal Abrasions

#### What is a corneal abrasion?

A corneal abrasion is a scratch on the surface of the cornea. The cornea is the clear outer layer on the front of the eye. Corneal abrasions can be very painful.

#### How does it occur?

Corneal abrasions can be caused by:

- **A sports injury.** This can happen in sports such as basketball or football when a player gets poked in the eye, or in tennis or racquetball when a player gets hit in the eye with the ball.
- **A tiny object that gets in your eye.** The object may come out in your tears, or your health care provider may need to remove it.
- **An object that scratches your eye.** You may scratch your eye with something such as a fingernail, branch, piece of paper, or comb.
- **Problems with contact lenses.** Gas permeable contacts may become chipped or cracked and scratch your eye. Wearing contact lenses too long can also cause an abrasion.

#### What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

- redness
- tearing
- feeling like you have something in your eye
- pain
- a scratchy feeling
- sensitivity to light
- blurry vision.

#### How is it diagnosed?

Your health care provider will ask about your symptoms and ask if you know how your eye was scratched. (If you don't know, the cause may be a disease rather than an object in your eye.) Using special eyedrops and a light that makes an abrasion easier to see, your provider will look at your eye. The drops contain a dye that will make your vision yellow for a few minutes.

#### How is it treated?

If something is still in your eye, your health care provider will flush it out with water or remove it with a swab or needle (after numbing your eye with a drop of anesthetic).

Your health care provider may:

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- Give you antibiotic drops or ointment to use for several days.
- Give you another medicine that dilates your eyes and helps relieve pain and sensitivity to light.
- Want you to wear an eye patch. The patch keeps your eyelid shut, helps the cornea heal, and helps relieve pain.
- Place a contact lens over your cornea to act as a bandage. The contact helps to speed up healing and reduce eye pain.
- Want to see you often until your eye is healed.

### How long will the effects last?

Most corneal abrasions heal in a day or two. If your symptoms last longer than that, see your health care provider again because you may have a more serious problem.

### How can I help prevent a corneal abrasion?

- Always wear goggles, safety glasses, or eye shields at work or when playing sports where your eyes could be injured.
- Follow your eye care provider's instructions for wearing and caring for contact lenses. Do not wear them longer than recommended.

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